

# Byron L. Dorgan

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**Long stalled legislation now moving:**

## **DORGAN SAYS FAA BILL WILL BOOST AIRLINE SERVICE IN NORTH DAKOTA**

(FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA) — U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) said Monday Congress is expected to soon enact a long delayed FAA re-authorization bill that will be helpful to North Dakota airports and scheduled airline service.

The bill, which Dorgan helped write as a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, has been stalled for almost a year in a conference committee, but he said Congress has now reached an agreement and could pass the bill as early as tomorrow.

Dorgan, speaking to the Upper Midwest Aviation Symposium in Fargo today, said that the bill contains provisions that will increase funds for airport improvements and help rural communities encourage new commercial airline service.

“This legislation will authorize the Department of Transportation to require the major airlines to offer interline agreements with regional carriers in Essential Air Service (EAS) cities when major airlines control more than 60 percent of the traffic at a hub airport,” Dorgan said. “This provision offers the potential of attracting better air service to some rural states.” All four North Dakota airports which participate in the Essential Air Service program – Devils Lake, Jamestown, Dickinson, and Williston – could benefit from this provision.

Dorgan told the airport officials that other provisions of the bill that will be helpful to North Dakota include:

- 1.) A substantial increase in funding for the airport improvement program (AIP). North Dakota's major airports share of those funds will nearly double next year. Fargo will increase from \$918,000 to \$1.8 million; Bismarck from \$708,000 to \$1.42 million; Grand Forks from \$627,000 to \$1.26 million; and Minot from \$523,000 to \$1.05 million.
- 2.) A strengthening of the funding mechanism that helps local communities invest in their airport infrastructure. The bill will allow local airport authorities to increase passenger facilities charges, if they choose, raising the current cap from \$3.00 to \$4.50. These funds can be used by local communities to invest in their airport infrastructure.
- 3.) A new program to help encourage commercial air service to small communities that have suffered from airline deregulation. The bill creates a Small Community Aviation Development Program -- a four-year, \$80 million program -- that would be in addition to the current Essential Air Service program which subsidizes air carriers who serve smaller communities. The new program would help fund efforts by airports in communities that suffered from deregulation to boost commercial air service to their community.

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